

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 514**

**“AN ACT TO ALLOW BOARDS AND ASSOCIATIONS OF LAKES AND
PONDS TO STOCK FISH”**

SPONSORED BY: Senator MASON of Androscoggin

**CO-SPONSORED BY: Senator COLLINS of York
Representative CRAFTS of Lisbon
Senator FLOOD of Kennebec
Senator HAMPER of Oxford
Representative SHAW of Standish
Representative TIMBERLAKE of Turner
Senator WHITTEMORE of Somerset
Representative WILLETTE of Mapleton**

DATE OF HEARING: April 9, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am John Boland, Director of the Bureau of Resource Management at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 514**.

L.D. 514 will allow Boards and Associations of lakes and ponds to purchase and stock fish raised by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife or an approved private hatchery, provided the boards or associations assure that the public has boat access to the pond being stocked.

Providing public access to Maine's public waters is an important mission of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Providing access to Maine's public waterways is challenging. Maine has over 6,000 lakes and ponds, over 30,000 miles of rivers and streams, and about 3,500 miles of coastline. Yet there are fewer than 400 state-owned access sites in the state.

Current Department policy stipulates that stocking programs can only be provided on waters where the general public's access is reasonably equitable with access available to

shorefront residents. We define “reasonably equitable” to mean that the angling public can launch watercraft that are similar or equal to the size and type of watercraft in common use on the pond by shorefront property owners. The bill’s intent regarding this critical issue is unclear to us. Specifically, the bill seems to suggest that boards or associations will determine the public access “needs” for their waters of interest, including determining the equitability of existing public access. This could create situations where a water body is stocked, but public access is non-existent or inadequate for all anglers.

It’s important to note that we have occasionally partnered with municipalities or other groups to stock public waters, provided we are assured that equitable access exists, and that we’ll continue to consider partnering with other groups on a case-by-case basis.

We are also concerned that this legislation, if passed, could impact the Department’s management strategies in regard to what species of fish are stocked, how many fish are stocked, what time of year fish are stocked, and how the private stocking programs are monitored and evaluated. In essence, private stocking programs could end up being inconsistent with the Department’s management objectives, and therefore may not be in the best interest of the general angling public.

Finally, we feel it’s important to acknowledge that the capacity of the Department’s current hatchery system could not meet the additional demands to stock waters that are not equitably accessible to the public, and that there are few private hatcheries to provide fish for a program as described in this bill.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.